



# Vertus

## HIGH SCHOOL

*Preparing Leaders of Character*

### *Student and Family Handbook*

### *2021-2022*

Vertus Charter School  
21 Humboldt St  
Rochester, N.Y. 14609  
585-747-8911



## THE VERTUS CREED

### WE ARE:

#### ***Courageous***

- *We do not falter in the face of fear or obstacles*
- *We face challenges without excuses*
- *We are strong enough to ask for help*
- *We never give up*

### WE ARE:

#### ***Responsible***

- *We keep our promises*
- *We work hard to accomplish our goals*
- *We help our families, friends, and community*
- *We respect and care for women*

### WE ARE:

#### ***Leaders***

- *We live honestly, honorably, and nonviolently*
- *We respect ourselves and others*
- *We are role models in our community*
- *We are citizens who fight for justice*

### WE ARE:

#### ***Our Brothers' Keepers***

### WE ARE:

#### ***Leaders of Character***

## WE ARE VERTUS MEN



# Vertus

## HIGH SCHOOL

### Preparing leaders of character

Our mission is to **prepare leaders of character**.

Our program is guided by three virtues:

- **courage**
- **leadership**
- **responsibility**

Our focus is on teaching the following character strengths that lead to success and well-being:

- **grit**
- **optimism**
- **self-control**
- **social intelligence**
- **curiosity**
- **gratitude**
- **zest**

Each of our young men is assigned to a small learning team with a full-time Preceptor who is responsible for teaching him character and helping him succeed.

### Year-round, personalized, mastery-based instruction

All of our students will earn a high school diploma that meets the NYS Regents requirements or an approved NYS alternative pathway. After high school, our students will go to college, enter the military, or begin a meaningful career. Our students have the opportunity to earn free, transferable college credits during their time at Vertus.

Our program is approved by New York State and meets all state law requirements.

Students earn their high school credits at Vertus by completing online and teacher-led courses that meet them at their unique starting points. To advance, students must do the coursework and demonstrate that they have mastered the material.

### Real-world experiences

Our goal is to provide a bridge to the real world through relevant experiences. Our students all have the opportunity to participate in hands-on learning experiences and regular field trips.

## Partnership

Education is a partnership between students, families, and school. The key to a good partnership is communication.

- Each student has an assigned Preceptor who is responsible for communicating with families at least once every two weeks and often more.
- Preceptors are available to families to assist with their concerns and answer questions (or when they don't know, to find out the answer).
- Classroom and/or homeroom teachers may call on an as-needed basis.
- Families can also call our school office at 585-747-8911 or stop in between the hours of 7:30 am and 4:00 pm whenever they have questions.
- We welcome families to visit classes or to volunteer. All school visitors must sign in at the Main Office when they arrive and receive a visitor badge.

## The Non-Violence Pledge

Safety is an absolute priority at Vertus. Accordingly, all students must agree to sign and abide by the Non-Violence Agreement:

*I agree not to use violence for any reason whatsoever at Vertus while representing Vertus or with any member of the Vertus community. I understand that this non-violence pledge applies to all parties involved in any fight, no matter whether I am right or wrong or whether another student started it. I understand that this pledge applies from the time I arrive in the morning until I reach home in the afternoon, including on the bus, at the bus stop, or in the Transit Center.*

*I understand that the likely consequences for violating this contract are suspension or expulsion under the school's Discipline Code.*

## Student/ Family/ School Agreement

Students achieve their goals when students, guardians, and the school all partner for student success. Our Student/Family/School Agreement sets forth the responsibilities of the student, the guardian, and the school. Students, guardians, and the student's Preceptor sign the contract at the start of every school year.

### Vertus Promises:

**Graduation:** Vertus promises to help each student achieve all graduation requirements. Our school will provide individualized coursework that meets the student where he is and allows him to progress based on his individualized learning path. The school will communicate graduation requirements and discuss progress toward graduation with students and guardians regularly.

**Communication:** Vertus promises to communicate with families in all the following ways:

- Preceptors will communicate about student progress at least once every two weeks (more if needed);
- The school office will send an automated message to the guardian every day that a student is absent and has not provided advance notice of the absence;

- Preceptors will follow up with an attendance call or text on the day of the unexcused absence
- The school will call home when there is a significant discipline incident;
- The school will provide regular Progress Reports showing credits earned, grades and attendance;
- The school will host family conferences three times a year.
- Classroom teachers will contact families of students at risk of failing class their class.

#### **Student Promises:**

**Attendance:** I will come to school in **full uniform** and **on time** every day unless I have an excused absence.

**Participation:** I will participate actively and willingly in the learning process. I will have any necessary supplies, sit in my assigned seat, wear headphones, take notes, follow all academic rules, pay attention to instruction, complete all assignments to the best of my ability, and request help when I need it. I understand that I am not allowed to sleep in the learning lab or classrooms.

**Behavior:** I will:

- Come to school in uniform and follow the dress code
- **Turn in my cell phone and mobile devices every morning (no exceptions)**
- Follow the "Five Rules":
  1. Follow directions quickly
  2. Raise your hand for permission to speak
  3. Raise your hand for permission to leave your seat
  4. Make smart choices
  5. Be kind
- Use respectful language. I will not curse, "drill," or use the "n" word, ethnic slurs, or disrespectful or demeaning language at any time with staff or with other students
- Refrain from fighting or play fighting
- Transition quietly, following Vertus protocol
- Respect school property
- Refrain from damaging school property
- Use technology in accordance with the Vertus Technology Policy

#### **Guardian Promises:**

**Attendance:** I understand that Vertus is a **year-round school, with a mandatory summer session**, and that my student is expected to be here every day. I will send my student to school in **full uniform, on time, every day**, well-rested, and ready to learn. I will call the school when he is sick or needs to miss school for an emergency.

**Partnership:** I will keep my contact information updated and let the school know when my phone number or address changes. I will answer calls from the school as promptly as possible and will come to school for requested conferences. I will let my student's Preceptor or another staff member know of

any concerns about my student's well-being at school. I understand and will support the school in reinforcing the behavior expectations for my student.

**Family conferences.** I will come to family conferences to review my student's progress toward graduation. I understand that conferences will be held three times a year and that I can schedule an alternative appointment with my student's Preceptor if I am unable to come to the scheduled family conference night.

### School Day and School Year

Vertus is a **year-round school. Summer attendance is mandatory.** Our school year is divided into four quarters with time off in between. A school calendar is included in the appendix.

**Mandatory school hours are:**

- **September through June:**
  - **8:15 to 3:30 Monday-Friday**
- **July through August :**
  - **8:15 to 3:00 Monday-Thursday**

**\*Specific days outlined in the school calendar**

The school day begins with breakfast at **8:15**. Breakfast is free for all students. We expect all students to be here for breakfast, which is an important beginning to the school day. Our building is open to students beginning at **7:30**.

### Attendance

Students must arrive at school on time every day and stay for the whole day.

- Students cannot learn and succeed if they are not in school.
- Guardians must ensure that students attend school year-round, arrive on time every day in full uniform, and stay on campus for the full school day.
- Whenever possible, medical and other appointments should be planned for school breaks or outside of school hours.

If a student must be absent for illness or other emergency:

- A guardian must contact the Main Office before 9:00 am.
- If a student must be signed out before the end of the day in an emergency, the guardian must call the Main Office to let a staff member know.
- Guardians who are signing out a student should report to the Main Office.

Students who are absent or tardy without a valid excuse:

- may receive detention
- may be barred from participation in extracurricular, enrichment, or sports activities.
- Students must meet attendance requirements to participate in sports.

Consequences of chronic attendance issues include but are not limited to:

- Parent conference
- If a student frequently misses school, the school may file a PINS (person in need of supervision).
- Chronic absenteeism, defined as eighteen or more days absent by NYS, may result in a student being involuntarily withdrawn.

***Please refer to the Comprehensive Attendance Plan for a detailed description.***

### Information and Concerns

Copies of all Vertus policies are available on our website and in our office. Concerns about students should be addressed with

- Student's Preceptor
- Counseling staff
- Director of Student Success Services
- CEO

Our formal complaint policy, which is required by the state, is included in the appendix.

We respect the privacy of our students and families. The Family and Educational Privacy Act (FERPA) provides important protection for student information. We comply with FERPA. Our FERPA policies are available upon request.

### Academics

#### Graduation Requirements

To graduate, a student must:

- Earn a minimum of 22 high school credits as specified in the New York State Diploma Regulations
- Pass all Regents Exams required by New York State regulations (currently 5 Regents Exams for most students)
- Demonstrate a success plan for one of three post-secondary options: 1) university; 2) community college or technical school; 3) Military; or 4) employment.

***\*22 Credits and 5 Regents exams are the MINIMUM requirement to earn a NYS regents diploma. We encourage our students to do what is in their best interest academically, depending on their plans after Vertus.***

#### Course Placement and Credit

We use the NWEA MAP tests to measure academic progress. All first and second-year students take the NWEA twice a year.

- New students will be given the NWEA test at the start of school or when they arrive.

- The results will be used to place students in the appropriate classes both on and off Edgenuity.
- Teachers may request a change in course placement based on transferred course credit from prior schools, prior Regents test passage, or observations of student skill level and progress.

Our blended learning program allows us to meet students where they are with personalized course selection while still providing in-person instruction and help as well as classroom experiences.

- Our online curriculum is from Edgenuity
- All Edgenuity courses earn .25 credit
  - Most core high school courses are taken on Edgenuity
- Teacher-led classes
  - Teacher-led courses are free-standing courses that build proficiency in ELA and math, prepare students for the specialized requirements of the NYS Regents, or offer content, such as PE or foreign languages that are best taught in the classroom.
- Typically students spend about half their instructional time online in the learning lab and half in classrooms. This may vary depending on the student's individual progress and needs.

High school credit is earned for all coursework completed.

Regents Exams are scheduled after students have learned the material so that they can pass. If a student arrives at Vertus behind academically, he may not take Regents Exams until his second year or later, depending on his readiness.

- Students have four years to pass five Regents Exams
- Regents Exams are given three times per year
- Families can discuss the timing of Regents Exams with Preceptors or Counselors.

### Promotion Requirements

Vertus is an innovative, mastery-based high school that does not have traditional grade levels. Because student's progress toward graduation is based on their individualized learning path, the school does not distinguish among "9<sup>th</sup>" graders, "10<sup>th</sup>" graders, etc. Students advance based on performance, not based on the amount of time they have spent in school.

Tie	Academic Guidelines
Intermediate	Earned at least 5.5 credits and have passed 1 regents exam
Advanced	Earned at least 11 total credits and have passed 2 regents exams
Professional	Earned at least 16.5 total credits, and have passed 3 Regents exams

### **Level-Up Ceremony**

Students on track to graduate will receive a Vertus Polo Shirt that they can wear to school as a part of their uniform. This ceremony will be a milestone celebration that will motivate and encourage students to stay on track to graduate throughout their high school careers. Families and community leaders will join us as we celebrate the students, followed by a large reception in the cafeteria.

- 1st year = 5.5 credits and at least 1 Regents Exam
- 2nd year = 11 credits and at least 2 Regents Exams
- 3rd year = 16.5 credits and at least 3 Regents Exams

### **Vertus Induction Ceremony**

The Vertus Induction Ceremony is an event where we celebrate new students who have adopted the Vertus way and shown they are a Vertus young Man.

- Memorize the Creed
- Introduce themselves the Vertus way
- Have at least %85 attendance

Students are required to be dressed in the shirt/tie uniform as they receive their Red Vertus Blazer. Families are invited and encouraged to join as we celebrate the students, followed by a light reception.

### **School Closures**

We are closed whenever Rochester City Schools close for snow or other weather emergencies. Please check local news outlets for news of school closings.

### **Closed Campus**

Vertus is a closed campus. Once students arrive on campus, they must remain on school grounds unless signed out by an authorized party. Students may not leave the campus once their school bus arrives. Students should not be outside the school building for any reason unless approved or escorted by a staff member.

**Students who participate in early morning, school-sponsored activities before 8:15 am must sign in and not leave the building once they have entered it.**

### **Uniform**

Uniforms are an important part of our culture. The Vertus uniform signifies that:

- We are all members of one team
- We respect ourselves, our team, and our school
- We have made a transition from home to school and are ready to learn
- We are preparing to take our place as leaders in the community and the world
- We pay attention to detail
- We do not judge each other based on our clothing
- We are proud to be Vertus men

Students may not attend school out of uniform. If a student arrives out of uniform, we may loan a student the missing item from our uniform closet or have him call home to have the item brought to school. Borrowed uniform items must be returned at the end of the day. Students who borrow repeatedly will serve detention. Students will not be able to participate in school activities unless they are in full uniform.

Student uniforms from September through the end of May (at a date to be determined):

- Vertus white, button-down, shirt tucked in
- Black short or long-sleeved polo
- Black or tan long pants (no sweatpants, jeans, cargo pants, or joggers)
- Tie tied, fully (when wearing the white, button-down shirt)
- Pants up – no sagging. Staff may request that a student wear a belt if pants sag.
- Decorative socks ok as long as no gang insignia or inappropriate graphics
- No brushes or picks, headbands, or "do-rags" in hair
- Belts are preferred and should be sized appropriately and buckled, with conservative belt buckles
- All students who have earned them may wear their blazers for designated days, meetings, and events, *or* at times, of their choosing.
- Vertus black sweaters or black three quarter zip Vertus pullovers (must be worn over a uniform shirt)
- Black dress shoes - no sneakers or boots

Students may wear black or khaki shorts or pants in the summer (from a date to be determined in May through August). They may also continue to wear the "regular" uniform.

On Spirit days' students may wear any official Vertus shirt or official Vertus gear while still meeting the rest of the standard uniform requirements.

No gang logos are permitted. Headgear/hats are limited to those required to be worn as a part of religious practice. No sunglasses.

Frequently asked questions about uniforms are included in the appendix.

### Cell phones and wireless devices

Students must turn in their cell phones and wireless devices to their Preceptor before the school day starts. If a student arrives late to school, they will be asked to turn in their phone at the main office when they check-in. If a student has a cellphone or wireless device during the school day, it will be confiscated, and a guardian will be called to come to pick it up unless otherwise designated by the Principal. Guardians who need to get a message to students during the school day should call 585-474-8911 or the student's Preceptor. ***Vertus is not responsible for lost or stolen devices that are not turned in.***

### Lockers

Every student is issued a locker at the beginning of the school year. The locker is for students to secure their personal belongings and valuables. Students may not leave their belongings in their team room. If

a locker issued to a student malfunctions in any way, it is the student's responsibility to inform a staff member. Personal belongings and valuables are the responsibility of the student. Students must monitor and care for their belongings. Vertus is not responsible for lost or stolen belongings and valuables. We ask students to come to school with only what they need each day and leave at home any items they do not need at school.

### Searches

To ensure safety at the school, Vertus retains the right to search any student, locker, bag, or object brought onto school property at any time.

### Discipline

Students who do not follow school rules will be subject to the Discipline Code. As appropriate, school staff will take actions to assist the student in improving his behavior, which may include but is not limited to:

- Counseling by school personnel
- Loss of privileges, such as eligibility for field trips and other activities
- Detention
- Parent conference
- The parent comes to school to provide in-school supervision to the student
- Restorative justice, taking actions to apologize or remedy the harm the student has caused
- Referral to counseling
- Referral for a health examination and evaluation
- PINS ("person in need of supervision") court petition
- Recommended services of outside agencies, public or private
- Behavioral management plans/behavioral contracts
- Involvement in an intervention program, such as gang intervention
- Suspension
- Expulsion

*NOTE: This list is not exhaustive of all discipline processes and is not rank-ordered.*

The complete Discipline Code is attached in the appendix.

### Gang-Related Activity

Vertus is a neutral space. Gang-related activity/behavior is absolutely prohibited on Vertus' campus, during transportation to and from school, and at all Vertus events. The school takes gang activity very seriously.

Vertus students may not demonstrate visible or audible gang identifiers. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Flags, bandanas, clothing, jewelry, or any other signal of gang involvement
- Hand signs or signals of any kind
- Verbal signals of any kind
- Graffiti or writing of any kind

Vertus prohibits the following on school property and at Vertus functions and activities whether on or off school property:

- Initiating, advocating, or promoting a gang or gang activities.
- Tagging or defacing property with gang names, slogans, and/or logos.
- Conducting gang initiations.
- Threatening another in any way in connection with gang-related activity.
- Inciting, soliciting, or recruiting others for gang membership or gang-related activities.
- Aiding or abetting any of the above activities by one's presence or support.

Any student found to have engaged in any of the above activities will be subject to consequences according to the Discipline Code, which includes suspension or expulsion.

### **Food**

All our students receive free breakfast and lunch. Lunches brought by students should be stored in lockers and then taken to and eaten in the cafeteria.

Students may not

- Eat outside of the cafeteria.
- Once students enter the building, they may not leave to go to Burger King or any other restaurants in the area. Vertus cannot be held responsible for students who leave school grounds for food or any other reason.

Parents may provide treats to celebrate special events – please call your son's Preceptor first to let us know.

### **Substance Abuse**

Drug and alcohol abuse prevents students from achieving their potential. The school may refer students experiencing problems with drugs or alcohol for substance abuse counseling or treatment. If staff judges students to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the student will be sent home and have disciplinary consequences. The school reserves the right to give any student exhibiting behavioral symptoms indicating alcohol or substance abuse a drug/alcohol test .

### **Smoking**

Smoking of any kind, including e-cigs and vaping, is prohibited on school property and school-sponsored events. Any student found with cigarettes, nicotine, or smoking paraphernalia will have it confiscated and may receive disciplinary consequences.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips provide students rich opportunities to learn and interact outside the classroom environment and are an important part of our program. A field trip permission form is part of our enrollment package. Special trips out of town will require specific permission from parents or guardians. Students who do not meet the school behavioral or academic policy may be prohibited from attending field trips.

## Transportation

All Vertus students who live at least 1.5 miles from school are entitled to transportation services. The home district of the student provides transportation. Families must complete and submit a transportation form every year for their district to receive these services. Though it is the family's responsibility to arrange transportation, we work with families to understand bus routes, answer questions about transportation, and address transportation safety concerns.

## Student Health

Our school nurse maintains medical records on each student. We must have immunization records and emergency contact information for each student. All students must have doctor's orders, and necessary forms on file before medications may be administered. Guardians should inform us immediately of any special health problems or concerns. If a student becomes ill during the day, he will be given immediate attention. If he cannot return to class, his guardian will be called to come to pick him up immediately. All students in their second year at Vertus are required to provide a current physical; the school nurse can work with families to arrange this if needed. Students who participate in school sports have additional requirements for physicals and qualifications for sports programs.

## Academic Rules

### **In classroom activities, students must:**

- Enter quietly
- Sit in assigned seats
- Take notes as required
- Follow the 5 Rules
- Participate in all activities (no sleeping)
- Do all assigned work to the best of their ability

### **In the learning labs, students must:**

- Enter quietly and go to assigned seat
- Sign onto the computer immediately
- Keep head up (no sleeping)
- Follow the 5 Rules
- Wear Headphones
- Use school procedures to get help when needed

### **When working on Edgenuity (online coursework), students must:**

- Use only their user name and password; passwords may not be shared with others
- Wear headphones during lessons
- Take notes in their binders using the Vertus note-taking system (staff will not open quizzes or tests unless a student has acceptable notes)
- Keep notes in the appropriate section of the binder
- No quiz retakes will be given unless the assignment grade is 80% or higher. Staff will review

- student notes before providing quiz retakes
- Staff will not offer answers to any Edgenuity assessment, including tests, quizzes, and assignments
- Math problems must be solved on paper before answering multiple-choice questions
- Have only one tab or window open at once
- Work only on Edgenuity or other approved instructional systems—no other online systems, websites, or applications may be accessed without permission. No storage or additional systems such as thumb drives may be used without written permission
- Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated—no copying, using multiple tabs to see previous answers, or plagiarism (see the Academic Dishonesty section below)

**Students who do not follow school academic rules will be subject to discipline.**

### Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism and cheating.

- Copying the words, ideas, or opinions of someone else without giving credit to that person in the form of footnotes or references is plagiarism. Whether deliberate or accidental, plagiarism is a serious and punishable offense.
- Cheating involves using or providing answers or academic work that is not a student's work.
- Students must always be responsible for their work and not engage in any manner of cheating.
- Academic dishonesty will result in loss of credit and/or failure, and students may be asked to redo the assigned work. Students will also receive consequences under the Discipline Code.

#### **Deliberate plagiarism (online or in classrooms):**

- Copying an answer, phrase, sentence, or a longer passage that is not your work (including Edgenuity) and passing it off as one's own.
- Summarizing or paraphrasing someone else's ideas without acknowledging that the work is not one's own.
- Obtaining a paper or other schoolwork from an outside source and handing it in as one's work.

#### **Accidental plagiarism:**

- Forgetting to place quotation marks around another writer's words.
- Omitting a source citation for another's idea because one is unaware of the need to acknowledge the idea.

#### **Cheating (online or in classrooms):**

- Submitting answers other than one's own.
- Copying or obtaining answers to a quiz or test from Edgenuity, another student, staff, or any source.
- Providing another student questions or answers to, or copies of, quiz or test questions.
- Having or using non-permitted materials or devices during quizzes or tests.
- Duplicating another student's project or work for submission as one's work.
- Having someone other than the student prepare the student's answers, homework, paper, project, laboratory report, or take-home test.
- Permitting another student to copy one's answers, homework, paper, project, laboratory report,

- quiz, or test.
- Giving another student a user name or password or using another student's user name or password.

### **Technology Policy**

The goal of computer access at school is to provide a personalized curriculum and build technology skills, information gathering skills, and communication skills.

**Responsible students use technology carefully:** Students must return the equipment in the same manner in which it was received. Purposely damaging technology or equipment will result in disciplinary consequences.

**Responsible students use the Internet appropriately:** When web browsing is allowed:

- Students are responsible for all web pages accessed.
- Students are not allowed to access, use or possess pornographic, gang-related, violent, illegal, or inappropriate material.
  - This includes accessing inappropriate material on phones or other personal devices while on school premises.
- Students may not access any social media, email, chats, or blogs on school devices without the consent of a staff member.
- Students are not allowed to access, use, or possess unauthorized or illegally obtained hardware, software, data, or files deemed dangerous to the integrity of the Vertus network system (e.g., viruses, worms, or other harmful programs designed to disrupt or alter a computer's functions). Students may not alter any network address or identifiers.
- Students must not attempt unauthorized entry to any area of the network, interfere with, or disrupt any computer, network, source, or equipment, regardless of who owns, operates, or supervises it.
- Students should not give out any personal information online such as an address, telephone number, parent's work address or telephone number, or any other person's address or telephone number without parental permission.
- Students should tell a staff member immediately if they experience an uncomfortable situation.

**Responsible students respect the privacy and rights of others:**

- Students must keep their Edgenuity and any other computer account, user name, and password private.
- Students may not access the records of other students.
- Students may not destroy or damage another person's files or messages.
- Students may not use school computers, the school network, Edgenuity, or the Internet to make inappropriate or negative comments about other students, teachers, administrators, or the school.

**Responsible students maintain the integrity of the school network:**

- Students are accountable for all emails sent or received under their user accounts.
- Students may not use the network or labs for wasteful or frivolous purposes including, but not

limited to; playing games, drawing pictures, social media, using chat programs, listening to music, watching videos unrelated to a school assignment, participating in "chain letters," writing blogs, participating in online chats, or engaging in any commercial activities including advertising or sales. It is the student's responsibility to follow all computer lab rules and obey the supervisors of the labs.

- Students should not expect that files stored on school-based computers or servers will be private.
- Electronic messages and files stored on school-based computers or stored outside the school using the school's internet account may be treated like school lockers. The school reserves the right to monitor any and all emails/messages sent on or within the school property. All administrators, Preceptors, and Teachers have access to stored files and email. Administrators, Preceptors, and Teachers may review files and messages at any time to maintain the system's integrity, ensure that students are acting responsibly, conduct the business of the school, and comply with legal requirements.
- School student email is school-owned, and as such, students have no reasonable expectation of privacy to student email. Accordingly, student email accounts can be searched without notice, consent, or reasonable suspicion.
- Students observing or knowing of any violation of these guidelines or of a security problem on the network/internet must notify a staff member.

**Failure to comply with the Technology Policy may result in loss of computer privileges and other consequences under the Discipline Code.**

### Student Athletics

**Vertus offers the following sports:**

#### **Fall Sports (Starts August):**

- Varsity Cross Country (For 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> Years)
- JV Football (For 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> Years)

#### **Winter Sports (Starts November):**

- JV Basketball (For 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Years)
- Varsity Basketball (For 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Years)
- Varsity Indoor Track & Field (For 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> Years)

#### **Spring Season (Starts March):**

- JV Baseball (For 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> Years)
- Varsity Outdoor Track & Field (For 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> Years)

All students need to be in school on time and uphold the school mission and ideals every day. Representing your school as a student-athlete is a privilege, and the expectation is that you adhere to the following code of conduct.

**Attendance:** Students who participate in athletic programs at Vertus High School must hold an **85% or better attendance rate.**

- Absent students are not permitted to attend practice, after-school workouts, or contests.
- Students who come to school unexcused after 10:00 am will not be permitted to attend practice, after-school workouts, or contests. The Athletic Director will notify coaches as needed.

- Students who have an excused late arrival will be permitted to attend practice, after-school workouts, or contests at the discretion of the Athletic Director.
- Patterns of absences or tardiness may affect the student's ability to continue participating in Vertus athletic programs as recommended by the Athletic Director. The Principal will make final determinations.

**Behavior:** The expectation is that students who participate in athletic programs at Vertus High School follow all school rules.

- Consequences for being sent to 207 or other disciplinary infractions will be at the discretion of the Athletic Director and communicated to the coach accordingly.
- Students who go to 207 four or more times in a week will miss the next scheduled contest.
- Patterns of being sent to 207 may affect the student's ability to continue participating in Vertus athletic programs as determined by the Athletic Director.
- Suspended students are not permitted to attend practice, after-school workouts, or contests until the end of their suspension.

**Academics:** The expectation is that students who participate in athletic programs at Vertus High School are on track in their Edgenuity courses.

- Students who fall behind in two or more Edgenuity courses must attend one of the offered teacher office hours until they are back on track. Coaches will be notified of students in need of mandatory office hour's attendance by the Athletic Director.
- Students who continuously fall behind in more than two Edgenuity courses may affect the students' ability to continue to participate in Vertus athletic programs.

**Participation:** Students participating in athletic programs at Vertus High School are expected to get re-qualified each sports season. Students must be re-qualified before they can try out for any athletic program.

- Participation is not guaranteed
- Depending on student interest, cuts may become a factor at the end of tryouts
- Playing time will be at the discretion of the Coach
- Parents should first direct concerns to the Coach
- Parents should then direct unresolved concerns or further concerns to the Athletic Director

To get re-qualified, students need:

- Register for the sport online at:
  - [Familyid.com/organizations/vertus-high-school-rochester-ny](http://Familyid.com/organizations/vertus-high-school-rochester-ny)
  - Registration opens 30 days before the start of the season
- An updated physical exam (within one year) on file
- Current immunizations on file
- Medical eligibility form signed by a parent
- Doctor orders for an inhaler, epi-pen, or restriction clearance (if applicable)
- Glasses for vision test (if applicable)

**Failure to adhere to any of these guidelines may affect the student's ability to participate in Vertus High School's athletic programs.**

## Student Parking

Parking at Vertus is limited. Students who are on track to graduate may request driving and parking privileges. These privileges are awarded only with written guardian's consent and as space is available.

To request parking privileges, a student must bring to the office:

- A valid New York State Class D (not DJ) driver's license
- Valid registration for the car he will use
- A valid insurance card for the vehicle he will use
- A completed "Student Parking Agreement/Guardian Release Form" signed by both the student and guardian.
- A student can request a "Student Parking Agreement/Guardian Release Form" from the main office.

***\*Students found driving to school without a valid driver's license could receive disciplinary consequences.***

Rules applicable to student drivers are outlined in the Student Parking Agreement/Guardian Release form. These rules include:

- Student drivers are expected to be in school on time and not leave before their dismissal.
- Unauthorized vehicles are not allowed on school property during school hours. A student driver must promptly notify the office if he is no longer using the car described on the Student Parking Agreement.
- Student drivers must abide by state and local traffic laws at all times on school property.
- Student drivers may not return to their vehicles or move them during the school day without permission from the Head Dean.
- No student who is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be allowed to drive. His guardian will be called to arrange a safe form of transport.
- Student parking is a privilege that may be revoked if a student fails to comply with parking rules, has disciplinary issues, or is not in good academic standing.

**Student cars that are found parked on school grounds without permission may be towed.**

## APPENDIX

### Student Discipline Code

This policy has been designed to create a safe learning environment. Rules are consistently enforced. Student disciplinary offenses are those actions or inactions that violate the Discipline Code or interfere with the delivery of educational services, jeopardize the health, safety, and welfare of any member of the school community, or threaten the integrity and stability of the school.

- A disciplinary offense may occur while the student is: at school and/or on, or adjacent to school grounds; participating in a school-sponsored activity; walking to or from school or a school-sponsored event; walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on school-provided transportation; or walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on public transportation to and from school or a school-sponsored activity conducted off school grounds.
- School-related disciplinary offenses may also include misconduct outside the school, such as the misuse of social media that could reasonably affect the school or learning environment. School administration will use their professional judgment in determining which disciplinary action(s) will be most effective in dealing with the student's misconduct.

#### Disciplinary Offenses

The following list of offenses is not exhaustive but provides examples of violations that may result in disciplinary action. The list may be modified from time to time and/or supplemented by Vertus staff with notice to students.

##### 1. DISRUPTING THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

- 1.1 Arriving Late to School or Class:** Student tardiness disrupts class, inconveniences others, and often results in academic difficulties. Students may not be late to school or class.
- 1.2 Inappropriate Language:** Inappropriate language is not permitted. Use of inappropriate language may result in detention, guardian conference, or suspension, depending upon the severity.
- 1.3 Cutting School, Class, Detention, or Mandatory School Events:** Students are required to attend all classes, assigned detention, and mandatory school events. Students are not permitted to have unexcused absences or to leave the school building without permission. In addition to other disciplinary consequences, these offenses may result in long-term suspension and/or expulsion. In addition to other disciplinary consequences, students may not be awarded credit depending upon hours of class time missed.
- 1.4 Misbehaving on school-provided Transportation:** Students may not misbehave while walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on school-provided transportation, including the school bus. Please note that students are subject to temporary or permanent denial of school-provided transportation (in which case students and guardians are responsible for travel to and from school), suspension, and/or other consequences, depending on the circumstances. Misbehavior includes, but is not limited to, using inappropriate language, making excessive noise, touching other students

inappropriately, being disrespectful of or threatening to others, and failure to follow the bus driver's instructions.

- 1.5** Blocking Access to Any Part of the School Building: Students are not permitted to block access to any room or part of the school building. In addition to other disciplinary consequences, this offense may result in suspension and/or other consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.6** Violating the uniform Rules: Guardians may be asked to pick up students who are not properly dressed for school or bring the missing uniform items to the school. Students not in full uniform may be suspended or not be permitted to attend class. Violations of the uniform rules also may result in additional disciplinary consequences.
- 1.7** Talking in the Hallway: Students are not permitted to talk in the hallway during class time and must maintain a quiet voice level and professional tone during class transitions.
- 1.8** Disrupting Class and Preventing Teaching: Students may not disrupt the class. In addition to other disciplinary consequences, this offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.9** Arriving to Class Unprepared: When class begins, students must be prepared and have all necessary materials (books, paper, pen, pencil, etc.).
- 1.10** Failing to Complete Homework: Students are expected to complete all assignments on time.
- 1.11** Cheating, Plagiarism, and Copying Other's Work: Cheating or copying the work of others (or allowing other students to copy work) is unacceptable. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.12** Forgery: Students may not forge a signature. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.13** Lying to a Staff Member: Honesty is an essential component of personal character and is needed to build a community based on trust and respect. Students are not permitted to lie or attempt to conceal the truth. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.14** Being Disrespectful toward a Staff Member: Students may not be disrespectful toward a staff member or any other adult associated with the school. This includes failure to comply with staff directives. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.15** Being Disrespectful Toward a Student: Students may not disrespect other students. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.16** Possession of Inappropriate Property: Students may not possess prohibited electronic equipment or games, printed text or lyrics that are vulgar, profane, or sexually explicit, or any other items inappropriate for school. Such items will be confiscated. See also Student Supply Section. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.17** Gambling: Gambling or betting is not tolerated. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.18** Misbehaving Inside or Outside of Class: Misbehavior that violates this Code inside or outside of class (at school and/or on school grounds; participating in a school-

sponsored activity; walking to or from school or a school-sponsored event; walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on school-provided transportation; or walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on public transportation to and from school or a school-sponsored activity) is not permitted. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances

**1.19** School Technology Policy or Sexting: Students may not violate the School Technology Policy. A student may not send, receive, forward or distribute pictures, video, or text messages of sexually suggestive, nude, or nearly nude images through the use of a cell phone or other electronic device. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.

**2. ASSAULT, BATTERY, BODILY HARM, INAPPROPRIATE TOUCHING, AND/OR THREATS**

**2.1** Engaging in Shouting or Threatening Verbal Exchanges: Students may not engage in shouting or threatening verbal exchanges with another student, employee, or another person. Students participating in verbal exchanges requiring staff intervention may be required to participate in mediation or meet with a staff member to de-escalate the tension. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.

**2.2** Causing Bodily Harm: Students may not cause physical injury to another student, school employee, or other person. Students are not permitted to harm or attempt to harm another student, school employee, or other person. This includes the use of a weapon or other dangerous object. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.

**2.3** Committing Assault or Assault and Battery: Students may not commit assault, including sexual assault, or assault and battery on another student, school employee, or other people. Assault is an attempt or threat to harm another person physically; assault does not require physical contact. Battery is any unlawful touching of another person. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.

**2.4** Fighting or Unwanted Physical Contact: Students may not fight with other students—from Vertus or any other school—or with any individuals. Harassing, pushing, touching, or any form of unwanted physical contact is not tolerated. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances, including the student's behavior and involvement in the conflict and the student's involvement in prior conflicts.

**2.5** Threatening to Bring Friends, Family Members, or Associates to Fight or Intimidate: Vertus students may not threaten to bring other individuals to school property or another place to fight or intimidate another student or staff member. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.

**2.6** Play Fighting and Threatening: Students may not play fight and/or threaten others. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.

**2.7** Hazing: Students may not intentionally or recklessly engage in conduct that creates a substantial risk of physical injury to such other person or a third person in the course of another person's initiation into or affiliation with any organization. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.

- 2.8 Engaging in Gang-Related Activity:** Gang-related activity/behavior is prohibited on the school's campus and at all school events. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences. Please see Gang-Related Activity below for further information.
- 2.9 Setting off a False Alarm or Making a Threat:** Students may not intentionally set off a false alarm or make a destructive threat. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.
- 2.10 Engaging in Sexual Activity or Inappropriate Touching:** A student may not engage in sexual activity of any kind or touch himself/herself or others inappropriately. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.
- 2.11 Engaging in Intimidating, or Bullying Behavior, Including Cyber-Bullying:** Bullying is defined as a series of acts or a single negative act (depending on severity) that involve(s) an actual or perceived imbalance of power, i.e., where a more powerful (whether real or perceived) group of students, or an individual student engages in harassment of another student or students who is/are less powerful or perceived to be less powerful. Bullying can take many forms, including but not necessarily limited to the following three forms: 1. Physical (including, but not limited to, hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, and taking personal belongings); 2. Verbal (including, but not limited to, taunting, malicious teasing, name-calling, making threats); and 3. Psychological (including, but not limited to, spreading rumors; manipulating social relationships; or engaging in social exclusion, extortion, or intimidation). Cyberbullying takes many forms and is defined as online social cruelty or electronic bullying that involves using information technology, including email, instant messaging, blogs, chat rooms, pagers, cell phones, and gaming systems, to deliberately harass, threaten, or threaten to intimidate students. This includes but is not necessarily limited to sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images; posting sensitive or private information about another person (including but not limited to "sexting"); pretending to be someone else in order to defame another. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.

**3. POSSESSION OR USE OF FIREARMS, WEAPONS, AND/OR DANGEROUS OBJECTS**

- 3.1 Possession or Use of a Firearm:** Students may not possess or use a firearm. In compliance with the Gun-Free Schools Act, 20 U.S.C. § 7151, the school will expel from school for a period of not less than one year a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to a school or to have possessed a firearm at school, except that the Principal may modify such expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis if such modification is in writing.
- 3.2 Possession or Use of a Mock Firearm:** Students may not possess or use an imitation firearm. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 3.3 Using or Possessing a Weapon or Dangerous Object:** Students are not allowed to bring a weapon of any sort to school, use any object in a dangerous or threatening manner, or have a weapon on him/her or in his/her property. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.

- 3.4** Arson: Students may not set a fire. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 4. POSSESSION, USE, OR DISTRIBUTION OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO**
- 4.1** Using or Possessing Drugs or Alcohol: Students may not use or possess any non-prescribed controlled substance, narcotic drug, a hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind. Prescribed and over-the-counter drugs must be delivered to the designated school staff person by the guardian with a signed medication authorization form unless the school nurse approves possession of prescribed or over-the-counter drugs with appropriate authorization. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences. In addition, the student may be enrolled in counseling and a group that supports adolescents struggling with drug abuse.
- 4.2** Selling or Transferring Drugs or Alcohol: Students may not sell, distribute, or possess with intent to sell or distribute a prescribed or non-prescribed controlled substance. Nor should students carry paraphernalia related to drugs or alcohol (ex: pill bottles, etc.). Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.
- 4.3** Using, Possessing, Selling, or Transferring Tobacco Products: The use of tobacco is banned. Students may not use or possess cigarettes, chewing tobacco, or other tobacco products. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 5. HARASSMENT AND VIOLATIONS OF CIVIL RIGHTS**
- 5.1** Violating the Civil Rights of Others: Students may not violate the civil rights of others. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.
- 5.2** Engaging in Harassing Behavior: Students may not engage in any form of harassing behavior. Harassment is defined as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidation, or abuse that has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional, or physical well-being; or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety. Such conduct, verbal threats, intimidation, or abuse includes but is not limited to bullying, cyberbullying, sexting or other conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex. In addition, students may not make unwanted sexual advances toward or commit sexual harassment of any school community members. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.
- 5.3** Abusive or Profane Language or Treatment: Students may not use abusive, threatening, vulgar, coarse, or degrading language (including racial epithets or sexist or homophobic remarks). Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.
- 5.4** Engaging in Inappropriate use of Social Media: Students may not engage in conduct or communication that may harass or intimidate any school community members or

reasonably lead to a disruption of the educational environment. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.

**6. THEFT OR VANDALISM**

**6.1 Theft, Loss, or Destruction of Personal or School Property:** Students may not steal, lose, or damage someone else's property or school property. In addition to facing other consequences for violating this rule, students are expected to return property to its rightful owner in its original condition or reimburse the owner and/or the school for lost, damaged, or stolen property. This offense will result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.

**6.2 Mistreatment or Inappropriate Use of Technology or School Property:** Students must treat computers, printers, and other technology with care. Vertus does not tolerate attempts to access the school's files or other inappropriate uses of technology or the Internet. Students do not have the right to use school computers to access chat rooms or email or access websites or files containing profanity, sexually explicit language or pictures, excessively violent themes, and/or other material inappropriate for minors. All students must comply with the Vertus Technology Policy. Students must not mistreat other school property. Depending on the circumstances, this offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.

**7. FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH SCHOOL-IMPOSED CONSEQUENCES:** Students must comply with school-imposed consequences. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences depending on the circumstances.

**8. REPEATED VIOLATIONS OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT:** Progressively more serious disciplinary consequences shall be imposed upon students who repeatedly commit one or more disciplinary offenses.

**Consequences for Violations of Policy**

**Detention**

A student may be removed from class or issued a detention for violations of the Code, including but not limited to: disruption to the school environment, tardiness, off-task behavior in class, lack of preparation for class, excessive talking, or any type of disruption in class, failure to follow school/classroom rules or norms, insubordinate behavior, or obscene or abusive language or gestures. All Vertus staff members may remove a student from class for a student's misbehavior.

**Suspensions**

Suspensions are a severe form of disciplinary action. Important information regarding suspensions is provided below.

- Before the student is permitted to return to school, a mandatory meeting must take place. The student, the guardian, an administrator, and the staff member involved in the dispute should be present. Failure to attend the meeting can result in additional days of suspension.
- Depending on the nature of the suspension, a student may be placed on a Behavior Contract or Behavior Improvement Plan. This plan will outline specific behaviors that the student will address with their Preceptor/Teachers and work to improve.

- Throughout the duration of their suspension, students are not permitted on school grounds for any reason other than a pre-arranged meeting with Vertus staff. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in an additional day of suspension.
- Any student receiving a suspension will be offered alternate instruction either at school or at an alternate location throughout the duration of the suspension. Students and guardians will be given instructions on accessing online classes so that academic progress will not be impeded.

### **Short-Term Suspension**

A short-term suspension refers to the removal of a student for a period of up to ten days. The Principal and/or his designee determine the duration of short-term suspension on a case-by-case basis. The Principal or his or her designee may impose a short-term suspension and shall follow due process procedures consistent with federal case law pursuant to *Goss v. Lopez* (419 U.S. 565). Before imposing a short-term suspension, the Principal/designee shall provide notice to inform the student of the charges against him or her, and if the student denies the charges, an explanation of the evidence against the student will be provided. The student will also be provided with the opportunity to present his or her version of the events. Before imposing a short-term suspension, the Principal/designee shall immediately notify the guardian that the student may be suspended from school. Written notice shall be provided by personal delivery or express mail delivery within 24 hours of the decision to impose suspension. The delivery will be sent to the last known address of the guardian(s). Where possible, the notification also shall be provided by telephone. Such notice shall provide a description of the incident(s) for which suspension is proposed and shall inform the guardian(s) of their right to request an immediate informal conference with the Principal/designee. Such notice and informal conference shall be in the guardian's dominant language or mode of communication. Guardians are encouraged to make an appointment with the Principal should they disagree with the Principal/designee's decision to impose a short-term suspension. In addition, the Complaint procedures are available to guardians who want to challenge a short-term suspension decision.

### **Long-Term Suspension/Expulsion**

A long-term suspension is the removal of a student from Vertus for a period of more than ten days. An expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from Vertus. A long-term suspension or expulsion may be imposed by a hearing officer ("Hearing Officer"). The Hearing Officer shall be the Principal, his or her designee, or a member of the school's Board. Students may receive long-term suspensions or expulsions for serious and/or repeated violations of the Code of Conduct. The Hearing Officer has the discretion to determine whether a long-term suspension or expulsion is warranted on a case-by-case basis, taking into account all relevant factors and considering the evidence presented at a Formal Disciplinary Hearing.

Before the imposition of a long-term suspension or expulsion, students are subject to the following due process procedures, consistent general due process protections, and those laid out in *Goss v. Lopez*, 419 U.S. 565 (1975). If a student commits an offense that calls for long-term suspension or expulsion, the following steps are taken:

- If necessary, the student will be immediately removed from class and/or school.
- Upon determining that a student's action warrants a possible long-term suspension, the Principal/designee shall verbally inform the student that he or she is being suspended and is being considered for a long-term suspension (or expulsion) and state the reasons for such actions.

- The guardian will be notified in writing by Vertus. Written notice shall be provided by personal delivery or express mail delivery within 24 hours of the decision to impose suspension. The delivery will be sent to the last known address(es) of the guardian(s). Where possible, the notification also shall be provided by telephone. Such notice shall describe the incident or incidents which resulted in the suspension and shall indicate that a Formal Disciplinary Hearing will be held on the matter that may result in a long-term suspension or expulsion. The notification provided shall be in the dominant language used by the guardian(s). At the Formal Disciplinary Hearing, the student shall have the right to be represented by counsel, to question witnesses, and to present evidence.
- The school will set a date for a Formal Disciplinary Hearing. The student's guardian(s) will be notified in writing of the date and time, place, right to representation by legal counsel, right to present evidence and question witnesses, and right to request a record.
- The Hearing Officer shall have the authority to hear and render a decision on the matter. The Hearing Officer shall oversee the Formal Disciplinary Hearing and listen to both sides, asking clarifying questions as needed.
- A written decision shall be issued to the student by the Hearing Officer that indicates a finding of the facts on the charge(s) and the disciplinary decision reached. This written decision shall be sent to the student and guardian(s) within seven days after the Formal Disciplinary Hearing.

The decision to impose a long-term suspension or expulsion may be appealed to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees must receive a request for an appeal within two weeks of the Hearing Officer's written decision. On appeal, the Board, or a Board-appointed sub-committee, will review the record of the Formal Disciplinary Hearing and any exhibits presented there. The student and the school will each have an opportunity to present a summary of their positions along with any additional documentary evidence they consider probative. The Board may elect to ask questions of the parties as well. The Board will provide the student with a written decision within seven days of the appeal hearing. The decision of the Board shall be final, except where violations of law or the school's charter are alleged. In such cases, the matter may be further appealed to the school's authorizer, as discussed in the Formal Complaint Policy.

### **Gun-Free Schools Act**

Federal and state law require the expulsion from school for a period of not less than one year of a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to the school or to have possessed a firearm at school, except that the Principal may modify such expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis, if such modification is in writing, in accordance with the Federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (as amended).

### **Discipline for Students with Disabilities**

In addition to the discipline procedures applicable to all students, the school will follow all applicable provisions of law relating to students with disabilities. A student not explicitly identified as having a disability but whose school district of residence or charter school, before the behavior which is the subject of the disciplinary action, has a basis of knowledge—in accordance with 34 CFR 300.534—that a disability exists may request to be disciplined in accordance with these provisions. The school shall comply with sections 300.530-300.536 of the Code of Federal Regulations. The school shall maintain written records of all suspensions and expulsions of students with a disability, including the student's name, a description of the behavior engaged in, the disciplinary action taken, and a record of the number of days a student has been suspended or removed for disciplinary reasons.

For infractions that do not constitute a change in placement or that constitute a change in placement for ten days or less (cumulative), students with disabilities shall be subject to the same disciplinary policy as to students without disabilities. Students will receive the same legally required compensatory education as other students. If a student identified as having a disability is suspended during the course of the school year for a total of more than ten days, such student will immediately be referred to the CSE of the student's district of residence so that the CSE can determine whether the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disabilities. In addition to the manifestation determination, the CSE may reconsider the student's educational placement. Such a student shall not be suspended for a total of more than ten days during the school year without the specific involvement of the CSE of the student's district of residence before the eleventh day of suspension because such suspensions may be considered to be a change in placement.

In considering the placement of students referred because of disciplinary problems, the CSE of the student's district of residence is expected to follow its ordinary policies with respect to parental notification and involvement. The CSE will be notified in the event of:

- The commission of an infraction by a student with a disability who has previously been suspended for the maximum allowable number of days
- The commission of any infraction by a disabled student, regardless of whether the student has previously been suspended during the school year if, had such infraction been committed by a non-disabled student, the school would seek to impose a suspension in excess of 10 days.

Students with IEPs who are removed for fewer than ten days will be able to access all core classes online from home or a public library. Classroom assignments will be provided. An assigned educator will monitor the student's progress and provide alternate instruction to give the student full opportunity to complete assignments and master the curriculum, including additional instructions, phone assistance, computer interaction, and/or home or in-school appointments.

Students with IEPs who are removed for more than ten days, which is determined to be a change in placement, will receive services to the extent determined necessary to enable the child to progress in the general curriculum and achieve his IEP appropriately. During any removal for drug or weapon offenses pursuant to 34 CFR Sec. 300.530 (g), services will also be provided to the extent necessary to enable the student with an IEP to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of his IEP. The CSE will make these service determinations. Students will be placed in interim alternative educational settings as appropriate per 34 CFR Sec. 300.520(g).

Students with 504 plans will be subject to the same disciplinary policies as students with IEPs, with the exception that in the case of a change in placement totaling more than ten days, the student shall not be referred to the CSE. The school will conduct its hearing to determine if the behavior is a manifestation of the disability.

## **DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND THE DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT**

### **General**

Vertus prohibits harassment of anyone by anyone, as well as unlawful discrimination, on school grounds or at school-sponsored functions. Harassment involves hostile words or actions, including but not limited to bullying, taunting, and intimidation that has the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual's rights to learn, teach or otherwise function in the school or which may reasonably cause an individual to fear for his safety or well-being. This policy includes, but is not limited to, discrimination and harassment based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex.

The school also prohibits acts of discrimination or harassment, including cyberbullying, that occur off school grounds or outside of school-sponsored events and which can reasonably be expected to materially and substantially disrupt the educational atmosphere. Such acts may be subject to school intervention and response and may result in disciplinary consequences.

Moreover, the school embraces its commitment to maintaining a school environment where all students, staff, parents, and the school community members feel safe, supported, and fully included. The school is committed to protecting individuals from discrimination and harassment and affirmatively addressing the fit between particular individual needs and the physical, emotional, cultural, and interpersonal dimensions of the school environment. Where such needs may be in conflict with one another, the administration is directed to seek outcomes that protect the integrity of that environment as well as of the individuals involved.

### **Prohibition of Retaliatory Behavior (Whistleblower Protection)**

A person who, acting reasonably and in good faith, reports suspected discrimination or harassment or participates in a related investigation will not be subject to any retaliation on the part of the school or its employees.

### **Knowingly Making False Accusations**

Employees and/or students who knowingly make false accusations of discrimination or harassment may also face disciplinary consequences.

### **Reporting to NYSED**

Pursuant to the *Dignity for All Students Act*, the school will report incidents of discrimination and harassment of students to NYSED through the channels and in the manner that NYSED requires.